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Digital discourse analysis about refugees in Brazil: contributions from Perspectivist Method

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How to analyze, at the same time, micro and macro aspects of the discourse? What resources can Data Science provide to Digital Discourse Analysis in order to contribute to the development of new analysis methods? Based on these questions, this work intends to analyze digital discourses uttered at the social network Facebook, based on Marie-Anne Paveau's Digital Discourse Analysis, (2017 [2021]) and on the Perspectivist Method used in Social Network Analysis, developed by Fábio Malini (2016; 2017).

The method involves extracting datasets, mining data and generating graphs that allow checking perspectives on a given topic at a given time, checking the traces of associative cooperation – between people, things or profiles (Malini, 2017, p. 91; Medeiros, 2015, p. 3069. This theory makes it possible to relate actors, discourses and other resources afforded at platforms (such as links, images, reported discourses, cited profiles), in order to obtain a more global understanding of these relationships between actors and discourses and, on this way, enabling new qualitative-quantitative analysis approaches.

We understand that the method is complementary to what Paveau proposes when analyzing, in a composite way, the discourses and technological affordances from the platforms, analyzing discourses considering the environment, that is, in addition to the text, the techno, the algorithm, the related discourses and commentaries and the various multimodal resources are considered (Paveau, 2021, p. 45, 50, 57).

For this analysis, we will use a corpus of 20 thousand posts published on Facebook, from Brazilian pages. The publications were extracted through Crowdtangle, Meta Groups' platform for researchers, which monitors more than 10 million pages and public groups. The query used to find the corpus was "refugiados" (that means refugees in Portuguese), and the time frame is the year 2018. At that period, a large contingent of Venezuelans sought refuge in Brazil, which motivated xenophobic discourses and political measures of rejection and, later, of sheltering these immigrants. In that same year, Jair Bolsonaro was elected Brazil's president, proffering ultra-right discourses, including some about refugees, as we have found in our corpus.

After the data collection, we use an application called Ford, that was developed at Image and Cyberculture Laboratory (Labic) of the Federal University of Espírito Santo (Ufes), for data mining. Then, the Gephi software is used to generate graphs that identify the centrality and strength of actors, lexicons or hashtags, for example, in relation to the whole. Each group of terms with more relations among them forms a perspective and can be analyzed separately, so we can have a deeper comprehension of each discursive perspective. For a better comprehension, we also analyze some posts in their environment, according to Paveau's proposals at Digital Discourse Analysis.

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